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By Alauki



^{"ONE FRIEND."}
"GO MAKE ONE FRIEND."

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"ONE"

"FRIEND."

I DON'T THINK HE
UNDERSTANDS HOW HARD
THAT REALLY IS.

HE MUST HAVE IT EASY
MAKING TONS OF FRIENDS
BEING THAT COOL...





A comic panel background featuring a green wall on the left with a small blue bird flying near the top. On the right, there is a blue curtain hanging from a rod. The scene is lit with soft, natural light.

WELL, I'LL DO MY BEST...
I MEAN, THIS IS COMING
FROM A GUY WHO HAS
"WON MORE THAN ONCE."

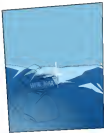
HAHA!
YOU'RE GOING TO BE
LATE TO SCHOOL!

SORRY, DAD!
I'LL BE OUT IN A
SEC!

BUT I HAVE TO ADMIT...



—BEING AS COOL AS
HE WAS IN FRONT OF
ME...



HOW COULD I NOT WANT TO BE LIKE HIM?





A hand is shown holding a small, round, clear contact lens between the thumb and index finger. The background is a solid blue color. A speech bubble is positioned above the hand.

HERE, NANA.
YOUR MOM PICKED
UP YOUR NEW
CONTACTS LAST
NIGHT.

A hand is shown holding a small, round, clear contact lens between the thumb and index finger. The background is a solid blue color. A speech bubble is positioned above the hand.

YOU MIGHT NEED
SOME TIME TO
ADJUST FROM
GLASSES TO
CONTACTS.

YOU SHOULD BRING
YOUR GLASSES WITH
YOU. IN CASE YOU
TAKE THEM OFF.

IT'S OKAY,
DAD.

THEY'RE JUST
CONTACTS.
HOW BAD COULD
THEY BE?
I'LL GET USED TO
THEM IN NO TIME.





I MADE A BIG MISTAKE.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE
BROUGHT MY GLASSES
WITH ME...

OH...



*OWN OWN OWN OWN OWN
OWN OWN OWN OWN OWN
OWN OWN*

M-MY EYES!
***IS THIS SUPPOSED TO BE
NORMAL?! IS THIS WHAT
PEOPLE WITH CONTACTS ENDURE
EVERY TIME?!***

***IT FEELS LIKE MY
EYES ARE DRYING
OUT!***

I'M STARTING TO GET
A HEADACHE TOO!
—REGRET'S—

DANG IT.
I'LL JUST REMOVE THEM
WHEN I GET TO SCHOOL.
I CAN'T GO BACK HOME
NOW. OTHERWISE I'LL
END UP LATE FOR
CLASS.

0 0 0





I SHOULD HAVE LISTENED
TO MY DAD. CRAP. I
SHOULDN'T HAVE LEFT MY
GLASSES.



HMP



THAT GUY IN THE
BRIGHT RED
SCARF...



OH!

HE'S THE ONE MY DAD
AND I SAW IN THE
PAPERS.

(I GUESS HE GREW
HIS HAIR OUT?)

I DIDN'T EXPECT TO RUN
INTO HIM AT ALL WHAT A
SURPRISE.

(HONESTLY, I THOUGHT HE
WOULD BE FLOCKED WITH
NEWS REPORTERS AND PEOPLE
FOR BEING A HERO.)

I WONDER IF IT WOULD
BE WEIRD IF I SAID HI?

OH.
NEVERMIND.
HE'S LEAVING.



SHINE

**WHAT'S THAT
SHINY THING?
DID HE DROP
SOMETHING?**

!!

**IT'S A KEY!
MAYBE EVEN HIS
HOUSE KEY?**

*I'LL GO RETURN
THIS TO HIM!*

...

*I'LL USE THIS CHANCE
TO SPEAK WITH HIM
WITHOUT SEEMING
WEIRD!*

...



FRIENDSHIP!



NO MATTER WHAT IT TAKES...

—
GO MAKE 1
FRIEND.

I WILL DO THIS ONE THING!

I WILL WIN!
(GO TO SPEAK)

BUT, AGAIN,
EASIER SAID THAN DONE.

BY THE TIME I FINISHED DAYDREAMING MY GOAL, HE
WAS LONG GONE. I COULD ONLY HOPE THAT I RUN INTO
HIM AGAIN BY LUCK.

I ENDED UP REMOVING MY CONTACTS WHEN I GOT INSIDE
THE BUILDING.

MY EYES BURNED SO BADLY, AND I COULDN'T SEE AT ALL.
THIS RESULTED IN SQUINTING HARDER THAN EVER
BEFORE.

MY PLAN TO MAKE A FRIEND SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE
AT THIS POINT. I LOST SIGHT OF THAT HERO GUY
AND MADE MYSELF LOOK LIKE I WAS OUT TO KILL





I WAS SO DISAPPOINTED, AND THE DAY JUST STARTED.



*UNTIL I REALIZED A FAMILIAR SILHOUETTE WITH A
BRIGHT RED ACCENT AROUND HIS NECK. HE SAT IN A
DESK BEFORE ME IN THE CLASSROOM I WAS
ENROLLED IN.*





I COULDN'T REALLY BELIEVE IT UNTIL I GOT A CLOSER
LOOK AT HIS FACE.



IT WAS HIM!
TO BE HONEST, I WAS SO
NERVOUS THAT MOMENT THAT
I COULDN'T SPEAK AT ALL.

IT WAS A MISSED OPPORTUNITY, BUT
I WAS DETERMINED TO FOLLOW
THROUGH.



I HAD TO SUMMON UP COURAGE TO RETURN HIS

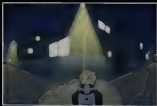
KEY. (IF IT REALLY IS HIS KEY.)



**EVEN IF IT WASN'T, I BELIEVED IT WAS STILL A GOOD
CHANCE TO SPEAK WITH HIM!**



**I WASN'T EVEN SURE IF I WAS DOING THIS "FRIEND
MAKING" CORRECTLY.**



ALL I KNEW WAS THAT I HAD TO TRY MY BEST.

TO MAKE A FRIEND.





I'LL TRY
AGAIN
TOMORROW.

AFTER SOME
SCOLDING, AND
SOME GOOD
SLEEP

(END OF JOHAN'S SIDE STORY)

I'm sorry this arc took long! Thank you for being patient with me and reading up to this point! I've honestly missed drawing Leon and am excited to bring him back already!

Also, special shout out to Catharis fans who met me at Anime Expo this year! To Monica, Catherine, Irela, and Amoe, it was such a pleasure meeting you! (Sorry if I spelled your names wrong. I should have asked how to spell it right there and then.)

-Ariki

(T-T)